

“Obsolete, plump lipped preacher” or “a treatful, strolling troubadour”?

Themes

The issue raised in the title “obsolete, plump lipped preacher” (*An Ugly Curse*) or “a treatful, strolling troubadour” (*The legend of Saint Margaret*) refers to the tension between the two different types of poet roles and poetic ideals that can be found in the lyre of Ady. These are aesthetics and public life. The literature characterises Ady as a poet of public life, what is more describes the literature of his period as a literature of public life confronting with Austrian literature characterised by aestheticism (Hanák 1988; Johnston 1972; Kenyeres 2001; Kulcsár Szabó 1984; Schorske 1998). The dissertation looks at this theory and tries to refine it, at the same time clarifying the image about Ady: the desire for beauty is an important element of the lyre of Ady. This is why a volume is chosen, which in addition to the author’s personal preference is a volume highlighting the most virtuosity in the Ady oeuvre, an example of the art nouveau. The comparison with the Austrian poets, Rilke and Hofmannsthal, who are said to be the representatives of aestheticism. The examination of the works of the three poets sees the different aspects of these two concepts; public life and aestheticism.

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Firstly, the dissertation reviews the literature in the chapter entitled *Ady and the Western-European literature*, then shows how Ady thought about poem writing and the fate of the poets in his articles until 1906 when *Vér és Arany* was written. I contrast this with the letters of Rilke and Hofmannsthal written about art and written at about the same time. In the following chapters some of the works of the volume are put in the centre of the analysis. Each of the chapters deals with an aspect of public life and aestheticism. This opposition can be broken up to further oppositions, these are the lonely poet contra vates, the disappearance of the subjectum contra exaggerated “I”, consciousness lyre contra experience lyre, the liking of fine artistic forms contra putting the subject matter in correlation to reality in the foreground. In addition to this I analyse themes and motifs, which were characteristic of the aestheticism at the era and are not far from the traditional Hungarian folk songs. These are glorified Death, the garden and the flower. Finally, as an odd man out, I analyse two works, in which the

subjectum takes on the role of a monarch: Ady's *Ülök az asztal-trónon* (*I am Sitting at the Table Throne*) and Hofmannsthal's *Der Kaiser von China spricht*. Here as a contrast I show how public life appears in both of the poems.

The method of the analysis is partly philology. In the chapter *Ady and the Western-European literature*, I review the literature with demand of completeness. In the poem analysis our starting point is the fact the poems of Ady can be understood from his prose so to explain a motif we show all the articles and short stories of Ady. In the cases of Rilke and Hofmannsthal I am not as consistent as in the works of Ady, however, sometimes I make references to letters and diaries (this would be the theme of another dissertation). At the comparisons I look for correspondences in motifs (death, garden, flower). I exceed traditional motif analysis because I also reveal poetic similarities and differences. In this subjectum theories (Frank, Foucault) helped me, as the basic problem of the poetry of the 20th century is the question of the talking subjectum. Furthermore, in the course of the work, I came across such problems as consciousness lyre, experience lyre, subjective poetry and the question of modern. I focus on texts, the problems arising from the works determine the theoretical questions not vice versa.

In my literature review I show that from the 1910's only the influence of the French symbolist poets was examined, the German and English relationship was excluded from the examination. This is so although Ady hardly new French, he could read the daily papers but not fiction. His articles reveal that he knew recent and contemporary French and Belgian writers. He received from them the conformation of his own poetic program. While the relationship of Ady and the French literature inspired literature this is not the case with German authors because there is only a slight philological relation.

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The formation of Ady's artistic view was examined before the publication of *Vér és arany* (*Blood and Gold*). Ady refused the ideal of l'art pour l'art from the beginning. For him the aim of art is outside art.

Firstly I analyse the poem entitled *Az anyám és én* (*My mother and me*). In this poem the role of the poet and his origin is dominant. Here I refer to Rilke, who coped with the lack of a loving mother. This shortage is present in his letters and some of his poems.

After this I have chosen poems, in which the dominant, exaggerated I is in the background. Death is a central motive in the poem entitled *Párisban járt az Ősz* (The Autumn Visited Paris). I compare this poem with Hofmannsthal's *Vorfrühling*, where Spring is formed, sensing Spring in the Winter. In a paradox way both poems are about life.

In *Sírni, sírni, sírni* (To cry, to cry, to cry) for example the poetic I cannot be detected in any way. The death motive is present in this poem, like in the poem entitled *A Halál rokona* (The Relative of Death). I compare this poem with Rilke's *Schlussstück* and conclude that both poems can be traced back to the death dance of the Middle Ages.

Besides the death motive the motive of the garden and flower are features of the era and a characteristic of the Austrian literature. These motives are also present in the lyre of Ady. Here I have also chosen two poems. The first is *Beszélgetés egy szekfűvel* (Conversation with a Carnation) where the Hungarian poet fate is depicted. The other is *Léda a kertben* (Léda in the Garden). In the oeuvre of Rilke the fate of the poet is depicted in the poem entitled *Der Dichter*. Here I conclude that in the poetry of Rilke the fusion of the I and the world is quite common, whereas in the poems of Ady there is a tension between the two. The poem *Léda a kertben* is paired with Hofmannsthal's *Mein Garten*.

I have also chosen two poems where the poetic I is a monarch. These are Ady's *Ülök az aztaltrónon* (I am Sitting at the Table Throne) and Hofmannsthal's *Der Kaiser von China spricht*.

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What kind of (open) questions are there in connection with the comparisons?

1. Ady is a modern Vates. He would like to change the world but at the same time he is aware of the fact that it is impossible. At the same time Rilke and Hofmannsthal are also open to social problems but in different ways.
2. The distinction between subjective and objective lyre is problematic. The statement that Ady is a subjective poet whereas Rilke is an objective poet breaks up when we analyse specific poems.
3. The appropriate term for the lyre of Ady is consciousness lyre not experience lyre since his poems were arisen in months and years not as a result of an experience.
4. The motifs of art nouveau present in contemporary Austrian poetry are not representative of aestheticism but very often have ethical momentum.

5. Ady is not a poet of public life, Rilke and Hofmannsthal are not purely poets of aestheticism.